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ABSTRACT

The rush to do qualitative enquiry in education in the past decade has spawned a variety of methodologies and non-methodologies. The desire for absolute rules and lawlike procedures lingers and the current search is for certain rather than good judgments about educational phenomena. A methodology described as "quasi-historical" is selected as one that is most likely to result in "good judgments" in educational enquiry. Lawrence Stenhouse's approach to the quasi-historical method scrutinizes critical educational phenomena (evidence derived principally from interview) using a process of intersubjective judgment of the evidence. Interpretations are refined and the "truth" found in case records is made explicit. The methodology makes no pretension to comprehensiveness but aims to connect the understanding of action to distinctively social levels of explanation. The three phases of the interpretive process are: (1) understanding as guessing; (2) explanation as reconstruction of "knowledgeability" in institutions; and (3) comprehension (depth interpretation) as reconstruction of structural elements. A reference list of 45 sources is included. (PPB)

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A Question of Good Judgement ; Interpretation
Theory and Qualitative Enquiry

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Introduction

This paper is about a methodology based on ideas from the interpretation theory of Paul Ricoeur and the works of social theorists including Giddens, Habermas and Thompson. A schema for a methodology is outlined in which the term methodology is defined (Schwandt, 1989) as "a metaframework for understanding the exercise of method and for understanding why it is that we choose to investigate sociobehavioural phenomena in particular ways."

The paper briefly reviews the idea of 'good' judgements in educational enquiry and the ways in which qualitative researchers have attempted to justify their methodology. The paper then discusses the quasi-historical perspective in educational research and this is followed by an outline of the method and theory which support this particular approach. The procedures for the proposed interpretive process are outlined and the paper concludes with questions about the scientific nature of the methodology.

A Question of Good Judgement

The rush to do qualitative enquiry in the past decade has spawned many different kinds of methodologies and non-methodologies. There are the methodologies of researchers who 'shift' in a radical way from so called quantitative to qualitative modes of enquiry; others in the quantitative mode merely embellish the former with the latter. There is a strong sense of certainty lurking behind the pillars of this kind of post-empiricist research. The desire for absolute rules and lawlike procedures lingers on and the search is for certain rather than good judgements about educational phenomena. Then there are the qualitative researchers who could be described as post-empiricist and who drawing upon the works of philosophers such as Popper, Lakatos, Feyerabend and others have questioned

the status of science. These researchers might be described as non-foundationalists who fall into either a group that is relativist in which "anything goes" and the question of 'good judgement' is not considered; or they might be described as a group that is concerned with the recreation of education as a science and the question of 'good judgement' is central to their concerns. This group draws upon but is not dependent on the social science disciplines (Feinberg, 1983; Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

One may observe several ways in which the latter group attempt to justify their judgements of data in the process of doing research, or as Soltis (1984) notes in the striving for objectivity in the sense that the research process is both a public and rational form of enquiry. While the task of describing this process is in many senses a metaquestion (the researcher knows more than she or he can tell) such an undertaking provides some public standard of validation of the research. Among these attempts to describe and justify the interpretive process are the formal translation of methodologies specific to social science disciplines or social theories; the use of methodological diaries (Walker, 1981); the systematic formal evaluation of one's subjectivity during the conduct of research (Peshkin, 1988); the authoritative appeal to statements from the 'new philosophy of science' for example, to heighten awareness of the dangers of relativism and to reduce or eliminate these dangers by practising the pragmatic virtues of epistemological conservatism and good sense (Garrison, 1986).

This paper attempts to contribute to the debate for the need to establish standards for validation of qualitative educational research. It does this by describing how good judgements about educational phenomena may be made within a methodology called quasi-historical. Good judgements about

educational phenomena are based on the practical experiences of those in the educational process. They have its roots in phronesis, the disposition of the researcher to engage in the interpretive act wisely, 'truly' and 'rightly'. The expression of good interpretive judgements is in praxis as informed enlightened choice in doing qualitative research.

The Quasi-historical Perspective

The selection of the quasi-historical approach within the above conception of case study method (Bartlett, Kemmis and Gillard, 1983: Stake, 1978)) picks up the suggestion of Kenny and Grotelscheun (1984:49) that we:

review and speak of educational research as a kind of historical explanation in situationally-specific settings, i.e. cases ... (opening) the possibilities of basing case study on a model of historical documentation, interpretation, and explanation.

The latter authors ignore the work of Lawrence Stenhouse (1978; 1981; 1983a; 1983b). His approach to a quasi-historical perspective sought to scrutinise critically educational phenomenon (evidence derived principally from interview) using the canons of historical criticism. Through a process of intersubjective judgment of the evidence, interpretations would be refined and the 'truth' in case records made explicit.

The quasi-historical perspective rejects a theory of lawlike history (Hempel, 1956) that determines the course of events in the past and in the present and will do so in the future. Stenhouse's view was a commonsense view of history (Hexter, 1971) based on historically meaningful questions such as: 'Why did it happen this way? Would it have happened otherwise?' The two perspectives on historical enquiry are reflected in 'the Greek tragic' view of history with the future unfolding according to pre-established rules, and 'the epic theatre view' that history can happen this way but it can also happen in quite a different way. Stenhouse's conception

clearly belongs to the latter view of history.

Stenhouse also rejected an appeal to idealistic attitudes; for example, to 'the great man theory' of history, to reductionism, and to behaviourism or positivism in his statement that (1983a:61):

the historian is interested in human action and human experience - consciousness - and how it can be explored without plumping for a theory of behaviour or motivation. Historians of this persuasion are less interested in cause than in careful analytic portrayal of situations and actions and decisions and perceptions for the consideration of those likely to bring considerable resources to understanding them. And their discourse is adapted to inform the action of actors.

Stenhouse did not opt for a theory of motivation (or sociology and/or interaction or ideology) but introduced the idea of an epic theory of history as the basis for social inquiry. The principal features (Bartlett, 1987) characterising his view of a quasi-historical perspective are:

1. The act of interpretation is based on evidence derived primarily from interview and recorded in written form which is then archived in what are called 'case records'. As Schostak (1985) observes, all researchers depend on some kind of data labelled the case record; in the case of naturalistic observers, it is usually memorised or recorded in their words. Quasi-historian researchers, like historians, rely more on the words of others than themselves. So the words and observations of the participants are archived in the case records.
2. Written evidence is archived and made public after following principled procedures - negotiation, access and confidentiality are key concepts - that preserve the ethical and political rights of participants in the research (Kemmis and Robottom, 1981).
3. Interpretation of a single case or cases involves a process of refinement of researcher judgements (by the same or many researchers) based on text evidence archived in the case records. In other perspectives, there tends to be a high degree of researcher selectivity and a parsimonious recording of data when and if it is to be made public.
4. The act of interpretation may occur in a social context other than that in which the evidence is collected. Many researchers (Kushner and Norris, 1980; Tripp, 1983) interpret their case records in situ. The quasi-historian researcher delays or defers the interpretive process, preferring to reclaim the meaning embedded in the text at a later date. In this way, the context of interpretation and narrative construction are the same in the quasi-historical approach.

5. Verification of an interpretation is possible through a process of critical scrutiny of case records within a case and through survey comparison across case studies.
6. Public access to written evidence in archived case records is necessary in this process of critical intersubjectivity and refinement of researcher judgement. Thus, knowledge may cumulate for the benefit of succeeding generations of researchers and educators.

Stenhouse's perspective is essentially about the creation and interpretation of the case record which is intended to freeze the data in an orderly but untheorised form; that is, in as far as it is possible for the evidence to remain undistorted by the ideology of the researcher. Case records might include school records, census information, as well as interview data. Researchers would have access, therefore, to good practice as it is seen by practitioners and inasmuch as it is recorded in the totality of raw data rather than in the case studies of other researchers.

It is of some interest to note that empirical-analytic researchers, such as Cronbach (1976:104) now support this view inasmuch as they argue that use of case records will be 'more instructive, at less cost than additional data gathering'. Stenhouse's purposes are more than economic however. His idea of verification through the case survey across case records demonstrates his commitment to the procedures of historical enquiry, to public access to educational phenomenon and his concern for the democratisation of research (Rudduck, 1985).

A review and critique

Stenhouse's proposal for what I have called a quasi-historical approach in educational research offers a perspective quite distinctive from others within case study method. It also provides a basis for a revised methodology.

Stenhouse places his perspective squarely within an historical-hermeneutic tradition in the interpretive social sciences. His perspective is individualist and assumes the

means for improvement are already available. Stenhouse's conception of historical reflection is also underdeveloped. He proposes 'intersubjectivity of judgement' among quasi-historian researchers: he is concerned more that researcher judgements are neither guided by social or behavioural theory. The methodology proposed in this paper falls within hermeneutic tradition but it also appeals to a form of critical social theory and a theory of action.

Stenhouse similarly aimed to develop an educational theory of action from the study of cases. The fact is, no theory of action of the kind proposed exists. While the proposed schema is in agreement with Stenhouse's rejection of methodology governed by theories of behaviour or motivation, it rejects a vacuous theoretical position and adopts a theory which recognises social and political contexts.

There is also something of a false methodological purism in confining case record sources to evidence constructed from oral interview alone. In this respect, Stenhouse resembles a documentary historian whose interests are with a purely documentary contemporary representation of the past to inform the present. To include the observations or words of the researcher/interpreter as observer could reduce the status of the latter to chronicler.

The proposed methodology however focuses on all human action and not only speech acts. To omit the researcher-interpreter's observations of the actions of those participants in the research would be to eliminate a wealth of evidence about the phenomena under investigation. However, by conceptualising human action in the broadest terms within the theory and methodology of the study, it is possible to include a range of symbolic written forms or sign units; for example, alphabetic, numeric, pictorial symbols. Hence, in the archived case records

many phenomena including the observations of the researcher as eyewitness historian and the use of film, artefactual evidence and notes on social contexts of speech actions are all open to external criticism (Gottschalk, 1971;1969) and internal scrutiny or interpretation.

Finally, Stenhouse's emphasis on contemporary educational contexts fails to give adequate recognition to the fact that present practice may be structured by social institutions and recurrent stabilities from the past. Also that understanding can lead to explanation and a depth comprehension if concepts in the topic of enquiry, for example how pupil-attention is established in the evolution of the classroom system are included in the interpretation of the case studies. This approach adds a critical dimension to the research and avoids Stenhouse's commonsense view of knowledge with its associated problem(s) of 'the practical' (Yates, 1985).

Theory and Methodology

From the above discussion it might be deduced that a concept of action is central to the quasi-historical approach in educational research. A brief description of the theoretical assumptions supporting the concept as it is conceived for the proposed methodology seems appropriate at this point. The idea of action can be thought about in three ways (Figure 1).

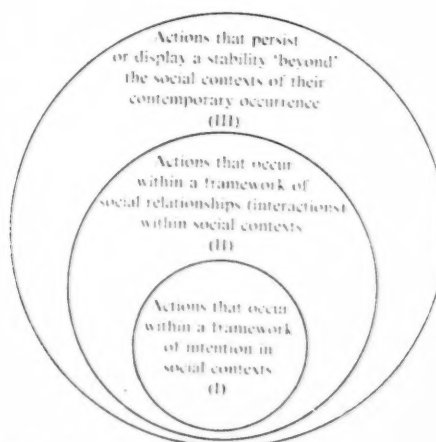


Fig. 1 Three approaches to a conception of action.

The first conception of action (I) is what the individual person, for example, a teacher intends in the social context of the classroom. This is the view of action proposed by the interpretivists who emphasise the micro-analyses of action and its relation to idea, intention, motive and belief. There are several issues that could be discussed at length about intentional action; that intention is not a pure mental state; that social context cannot be divorced from the intention of the actor; that action changes and is changed by intention; and that action can be distinguished from behaviour. The more critical issue for the methodology proposed here however concerns the possibility of distortion of intention. Intention may be dislocated from action which is then conceived as a distorted form of language.

Habermas (1971:92; 1972;1979:148) distinguishes between purposive-rational action ('work', 'labour') and communicative action ('interaction', 'symbolic interaction') to signify the distortion of intention in text. The latter is a category of action that focuses on the way language as a form of action is distorted because of a person's or group's interests and ideology. Actions occur within an understood or agreed framework of regulative norms, and the interests of, for example participants in any research, need to be unveiled if conflict is to be resolved and political agreement for effective communicative action is to be attained.

Giddens (1976:53) borrowing from Habermas's critique, recognised this when he stated that action is qualified as: 'the practical realisation of interests, including the material transformation of nature through human activity.' However, although Habermas may be right to recognise the importance of

interests and ideology in the social world, he seemed overinclined (Thompson, 1981:139) to regard communicative action as the most important component of the social world.

Finally, the meaningfulness of one's actions will depend on the interconnections between language, action and the surrounding circumstances. Each of these may be characterised as part of a language game, observed in discourse upon which the meaning of action is dependent. For example, a move in the language game may involve a teacher standing at the door of the classroom and motioning to the class with his or her arm. The action, its language and the social setting explicitly means 'Come into the room'. Alternatively, the teacher may move back and forth across the classroom, occasionally glancing at his or her watch. This action may have one of several meanings, waiting for the bell to ring or waiting for pupils to finish a task. The significance or meaning of the action is not dependent on intention, a mental event, but more on the social circumstance of the occurrence of the action. Actions can be meaningful (in terms of interpreting what is done or what happens in classrooms) without being evidently related to initial intention.

A second conception of action (II) which is not incompatible with the first (I), reminds us that actions rarely occur in isolated contexts. For example, a teacher acts in the social world of the classroom, the school, the community and society. Hence the teacher's actions need to be considered not only in an individualistic sense but as part of the lattice of social interactions that develop where several actors are grouped. The assumption is that the social world consists of speaking and acting people who make sense of themselves and others in a group, school or community; and that their actions are meaningful and intentional activities in that social world.

The social relationships a teacher develops in a classroom may be viewed as a resource or 'internal good' which he or she uses to undertake some activity or reach a goal. These kinds of social relationships must not be equated with the network of hierarchical contacts characteristic of social institutions or organisations. This is emphasised by McIntyre (1981:181) when he says:

Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with what I have called external goods. They are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers.

Institutional resource allocation is also a means of exercising power (Giddens, 1979:88). For example, a teacher exercises power (epistemic, authority) through norms and sanctions embedded in the school to coerce pupil-control (Giddens, 1976:104; 1979:65). In the theory of Ricoeur (1976) power is a part of the social formation of institutions and is related to interests and ideology. If the interests of persons within institutions are uncovered, ideology will be uncovered.

Power is endowed on a person by virtue of her or his membership in the social institution. This power is exercised through membership and in the pursuit of particular interests (Barry, 1965). People may share some common interests because they share membership in the same social institution. The ideology of a group of people may ensure the continuation of their dominance and their control over the manner in which resources are allocated. Ideology as it is used here is (Thompson, 1981:148):

a system of signification which facilitates particular interests. Structural conditions generally ensure that certain groups occupy the dominant institutional positions so that the prevailing ideology is commonly a legitimisation of the status quo.

This conception of ideology steers between two alternative

definitions (Mannheim, 1936; Seleger, 1976): as the collective consciousness of an epoch or lattice of ideas which permeate a social order; or as false consciousness, one which fails to grasp the real conditions of human existence.

A third conception of action (III) is associated with the persistence of some actions over time. It includes the idea that action has the ontological character of stability, persistence and repetitiveness when it occurs in contemporary social contexts; and the idea that a contemporary 'otherness' is bestowed upon the actions of for example a teacher, such that their occurrence may be dependent somehow on the actions of other teachers performed in past historical contexts. This idea of contemporary contexts dependent on past contexts is supported by Ricoeur (1971) who suggested that all actions leave a 'trace' or 'mark'. According to his theory of phenomenological critical hermeneutics, the event of acting or speaking passes away. It is fleeting; it appears and disappears. What is 'fixed' in what the teacher does is not the event of doing in a contemporary sense but the event of what has been done. This is the 'trace' or 'mark'. Hence when the teacher acts again in a more recent social context, his or her actions are somehow influenced by and related to the occurrence of an earlier action by other teachers in the past.

Ricoeur (1971:533) proposed that what one intends to do in the contemporary context overlaps with what is meant from the past historical context. The epistemological consequence of this thesis is that what an action means in a contemporary social context no longer coincides with what the action means once it is fixed historically (in Ricoeur's terms, in a written lexical form of text). His theory opens up another world with an ensemble of references which are non-situational and offer possible ways of thinking about the social realities of

educational contexts of the past. Actions within these realities may be freed from the social conditions of their production; they may exceed their relevance to the immediate circumstance in which they occur, and they may be reproduced in different contexts and contribute to the creation of others (Ricoeur, 1981c:208): 'A work does not only mirror its time but it opens up a world which it bears within itself.' This third conception of action implies a sense of history.

There is the dual dialectic in the idea of action which recognises that the actor pursues 'internal goods' with respect to his or hers own practice but also 'external goods' in and for institutions. In so doing action is governed, limited or constrained and recreated; but in the recreation of action institutions are themselves reconstituted (Giddens, 1976:61;1979:69). This idea reflects the agency-structure or micro-macro debate among social theorists (Figure 2).



Figure 2 The dialectic between action and structure.

The dialectic for example, between teacher actions and social institution ('structure' represented by the school) is neither static nor mechanical. Teachers actively produce text, but there is another dimension to human action and structure which concerns its reproductive character. These are the actions in social institutions that can be described or specified as persistent over a period of time and across institutions; for example, the persistence of expository method as a dominant teaching strategy in secondary classrooms.

Persistent actions require a set of stabilised elements or set of conditions in institutions which allow the actions themselves to be reproduced. The elements or conditions are defined as social structure, and constitute the third conception of action. Social structure is defined by Thompson (1981:145) as:

a series of elements and their interrelations which conjointly define the conditions for the persistence of a social formation and the limits for the variation of its component institutions.

Social structure, therefore, is a theoretical construct which attempts to account for the similarity which underlines the apparent diversity of social institutions. It is clearly implied that social structure is closely related to social institution (Figure 3).

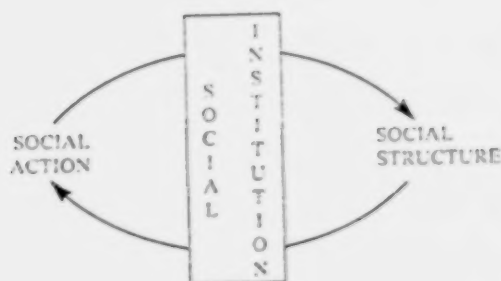


Figure 3 Human action and social structure linked through the medium of social institution.

Lurking behind the discussion of a theory of action that might inform the present study is the need to recognise the importance of understanding actions; that is, they need to be interpreted and given meaning. For example, the third conception of human action invites a 'depth' interpretation of the teacher's actions, the recovery of a substratum of meaning that may not be immediately evident to the observer. In Thompson's words (1981:64), this is because:

the meaning of an action [is] severed from the intentions of its agent and human action is transformed into an institutionalised social phenomenon which constitutes the process of history.

Making meaning of the tripartite characterisation of action

The performance of an action may be conceived as an event which is describable in a variety of ways. The meaning of the action is therefore dependent on how it is described. The task for the researcher is to clarify ways in which action may be described according to one or more of the three conceptions proposed. As Thompson suggests (1981:142):

By regarding the meaning of an action as specified by the expression with which it is described, this account renders the relevant meaning susceptible to semantic analysis. Once an action has been satisfactorily described, then the description may be in turn submitted to analysis within a general theory of meaning.

In analysing actions, the initial aim is to clarify the ways in which an action may be described, and to elucidate, as Habermas would have it, the criteria for the evaluation of alternative descriptions. This description emphasises the social circumstances or conditions under which action occurs ensuring that participants in the research 'are not naively enthroned, but systematically and critically unveiled' (Thompson, 1981:143).

The autonomous and meaningful actions of participants in a research study may be expressed and evaluated in several ways. Speaking is a form of acting. But the idea of action should not be relegated to this form alone. A broader category of action is language. Language according to Ricoeur is central in any theory about action. He proposes that the act of speaking is constituted by a hierarchy of subordinate acts on three levels. What a person says may be the locutionary or propositional act - the act of saying. The physical movements of the person, gestures, bodily actions are illocutionary non-verbal actions or that which the person does in speaking. Finally, a third form of action is the perlocutionary act, that which the person does by saying. The latter may include the many indirect and informal influences his or her actions might have on others in the same social context (Ricoeur, 1971:532).

Each form of action, according to Ricoeur, has a decreasing intentional exteriorisation. These distinctions are important because, in reconceptualising the nature of action, it has been proposed that the meaning of action will in some sense be influenced by the description of the action. The distinctions are important methodologically because what is often seen as different forms of evidence; for example, the words of teachers and researcher recorded observations, may be conceptualised under a more general theory of action.

The methodology of interpretation

From the above description of this theory it can be seen that a number of assumptions guide the proposed methodology. First, the meaning of actions is specified by their description. These meanings are not exhausted or determined (as in many ethnomethodological studies) by the researcher's accounts (for example, obtained in interview) of what they were doing, although this may be regarded as significant text in the interpretation of the case record.

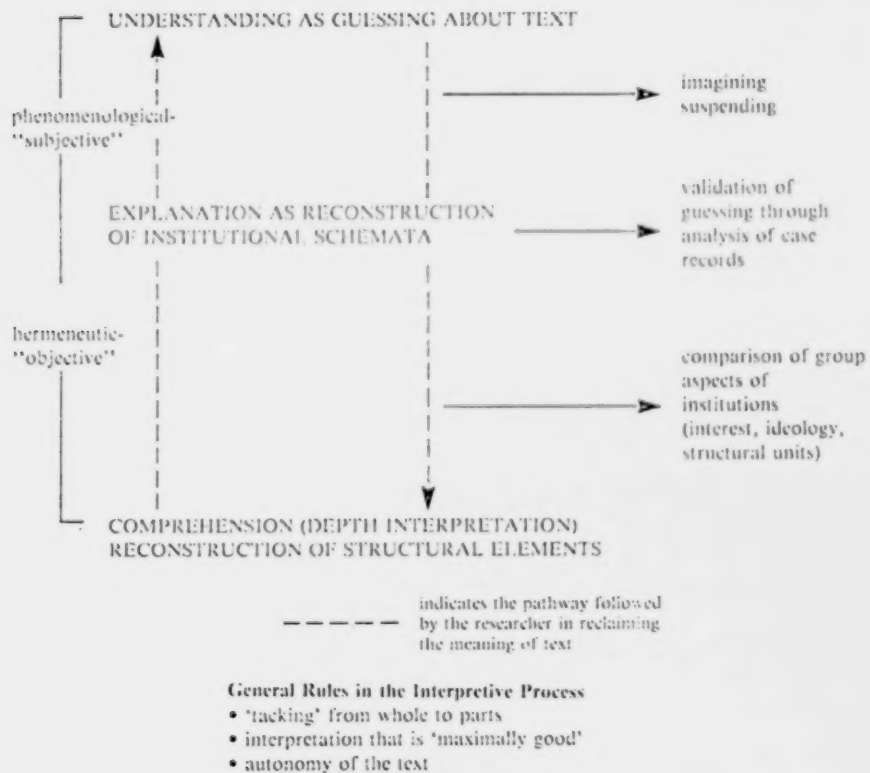
A second assumption is that the methodology may enable systematic interrelationships between the understanding of the actor's actions and explanation of their social genesis. Hence, the aim is to clarify symbols (words or actions) used by participants - symbols whose meanings are opaque; but through a process of 'depth' interpretation, the meaning of these symbols will be reclaimed by a reconstruction of structural conditions. In this way, the researcher may explain the origin of actions represented in the symbols.

Third, following Thompson (1981:167) and Habermas (1979:12) the methodology makes no pretension to comprehensiveness but aims to connect the understanding of action to distinctively social levels of explanation.

There are three phases in the interpretive process

(Figure 4) :

1. Understanding as guessing;
2. Explanation as reconstruction of 'knowledgeability' in institutions;
3. Comprehension (depth interpretation) reconstruction of structural elements.



The methodology of interpretation of text. The diagram reflects the "hermeneutic circle" and the moments of understanding, explanation and depth comprehension as the researcher critically scrutinises text in the case records.

Understanding as guessing

The first step in the interpretive process is to describe the social realities of the text in the case records with a view to evaluating action in the text. This step might also be seen to be not only a validation of the social realities in guessing but also a movement toward explanation because it takes the whole text statement about the actions of those in the archived records and subjects them to critical scrutiny based on categories suggested by Stenhouse (1983a). There are six categories and these are illustrated by evidence taken from the

case records of a transition education study (Bartlett, 1982)

which used a quasi-historical perspective:

1. It (the radio station) will be teaching them the concept of ongoing education rather than getting them out of school as quickly as possible. The objective wouldn't necessarily be to keep them at school, but it would be to get them to continue to educate themselves; and that's what they don't do.

[Jim: the Principal of the High School]

Assumption: this statement assumes that retention in a secondary school contributes to 'ongoing education'. It is evidence that assumes without declaring a reality outside of the interview. It is 'good' evidence because it is not self-conscious.

2. The objective would be.....to get them to educate themselves.

Testimony: the second sentence in the quote expresses thought and opinion announced with some enthusiasm and self-conviction. Hence, it is evidence in which the interviewee testifies about his or her own thoughts. There is an honest quality in such evidence and unreliability may be easier to detect.

3. that's what they (at risk students) don't do.

Witness reports: the last sentence of the quote is based on the Principal's experience of the post-secondary activities of the school's students and needs to be substantiated by documentary analysis and the words of others etc. This is evidence relating to what the interviewee has seen or known of events. It is possibly unreliable because memory fails or because initial interpretations often continue to be associated with events; it needs validation and corroboration with 'factual' evidence.

4. Researcher : You seem to be saying that the technical expertise is such that the radio station can't fail...?

Colin : Mr. T (the Deputy) will be coming back next year and although I've never met the man...in conversation with the staff he is himself a very sensible person in this area; and I imagine Mr. T has a very itchy finger at the moment now he knows this unit (the radio station) has taken off. I'm sure that when he gets back I might be relegated back at woodwork...

Hearsay reports: Colin is a first year teacher responsible for the technical operations of the radio station. His knowledge of the absent Deputy who also has an interest in technical aspects of radio is based on what others have said. This hearsay evidence reflects what the interviewee has heard others say, interpret or feel about events; it needs to be interpreted with great caution.

5. You seem to be saying....

Accounts: in the previous quote the researcher is inviting the interviewee to describe/verify ... "You seem to be saying..." In effect Colin is describing a decision-making process possibly a residue of prior experience. The return of the Deputy who initially occupied Colin's role could lead to the teacher's loss of the role to authority. This kind of evidence about the working of a process or past event or situation is organised specifically for the interviewee and it provides data about people and events in social contexts.

6. Researcher: Let's go back to what the lad said (at assembly) this morning. He said girls should be the workers while a boy should be the President (of the Student Council). Does the kind of attitude in this remark make your job difficult?

Jim : Sexism? Attitudes here in a small remote area town regarding that are very defensive; at least present attitudes because in this area the women seem to get a reasonable grasp at life compared with the suburban housewife who may be stuck at home all day, no friends to talk to etc. etc. Yet many of the local women are involved in sporting clubs and other organisations and are just as involved in community programs as their husbands. In a sense they don't see they need to be liberated. However, it is true...[that] the attitudes of the community itself are reflected by the students.

Reflection; the Principal reflects on the sexist attitudes of students and how this relates to community beliefs and practices. The evidence in this instance evokes understanding through recollection of an event; and through reflection the evocation of personal justification of how the radio station reduces sexism. Reflective evidence is not only a problematic form of evidence but it indicates a recognition by the interviewee that there is a 'problem' in the evidence: the interviewee figures it out.

Stenhouse's categories help to validate the researcher's guess because they focus on (social) realities outside the formal interview situation or that situation where human action occurred; realities that can be tested for reliability and validity which in turn have relevance for the 'truth' of the researcher's guess. The categories don't seem to have a basis in theory although they are clearly derived from doing research. A second observation about these categories is that they seem to be somewhere about halfway between the historical interpretive processes of internal and external criticism. External criticism in historical method establishes the authenticity of the documents to be interpreted. Internal criticism begins the interpretive process within the text of the records. Finally,

the social realities in the case records are enhanced by recording aspects of social contexts during the creation of the records (primarily through interview).

The next procedural step in the analysis of action is to view the evidence as a whole, to indulge in a phenomenological guess. Following Ricoeur's (1976) theory of interpretation, the researcher may do one of two things: comprehension about the referred reality may be suspended so the case record is treated as a worldless entity; or the meaning of text in the record may be imagined; that is, the researcher projects himself or herself to the original scene in which the teacher experienced or acted. In adopting this latter attitude, the researcher recreates what may be labelled the phenomenal events from the case records. In a sense, recreation occurs when the researcher or reader reads the archives. As the author of this paper, I recreate a phenomenal meaning of the evidence, in this instance the scholarly writings of others. I first reconstruct - take notes, read books and articles, write drafts, critique, discuss ... To mediate the meaning of other scholars' evidence - their writings and my conversations with them - I must appropriate that meaning and recreate it. This has been achieved by imagining, by creating a new kind of reference (the ostensive reference in Ricoeur's language) about the actions of others. The element of suspension is important in moving toward explanation but certain validation procedures are necessary.

Understanding as guessing and the process of internal criticism of text in the case records invokes the general canons or rules of hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969). These canons are:

1. a "tacking" between the meaning of the whole of the record and the meaning of its parts.
2. interpretation that is "maximally good".
3. an understanding of the case records 'ans sich selbst' - from within itself; that is, as an autonomous object.

The canons that are cited here refer to the three phases of the

outlined methodology and not just to any one single phase. At a practical procedural level, these may be summarised as follows (Vandenberg, 1984):

1. The researcher immerses him or her self in the text allowing a full experience of it and viewing it sympathetically.
2. The initial experience of the text has to be returned to, that is, recalled again and again because it is the 'guess' with its initial experience that has to be illuminated.
3. The text should be read for a second (and third, and fourth..) time for a deeper understanding of its definitions, concepts and sentences. The first half of the text will always gain immensely in clarity in the second reading because of having previously read the second half during the first reading.
4. Any difficulties surrounding the text or some parts of the text (for example, new expressions) may be dissolved by investigating biographical details about the author and the purpose of writing the text. This background material is only important, that is it only illuminates the text when the researcher returns to the initial experience of the text.
5. Important passages in the text should be given a careful sentence by sentence analysis in regard to grammar, syntax, logic, vocabulary, figures of speech and the interrelationships of each with the remainder of the text. The coherence, consistency and integrity of the author's thought processes are evaluated.
6. After the first reading, the researcher is not so much trying to understand what the author said as trying to repeat the author's understanding in his or her mind. The procedure is like role-playing, a temporary excursion into the author's linear thought processes in an attempt to unmask the discursive reasoning, the vision the author was trying to display.
7. An attitude of sympathetic attention to the text in the initial reading of the case records should give way to an attitude of critical evaluation.
8. The search for the 'half-truth' in the author's interpretation should be constantly compared with the 'truth' of the researcher's interpretation. Continuous comparison by returning to the text will provide an incomplete interpretation open to 'enlarged' interpretations and the cumulation of knowledge.

The reconstruction of knowledge in institutions

Depending on the description of action, the researcher may go beyond understanding as guessing to contextual reconstruction in the attempt (Habermas, 1979b:12):

to explicate the meaning of a symbolic formation in terms of the rules according to which the author must have brought it forth.

For example, in establishing pupil-attention in a classroom, the teacher acts autonomously with a competence in which he or she

may not be aware but which is guided by a 'knowledgeability' the deeply embedded historically located understanding they possess, a knowledge of pedagogy founded on the tradition of pedagogy. The task of the researcher is to explain action in terms of the application of this institutional knowledgeability the type of general formula used to produce many different actions and the code that guides, governs or limits actions in particular social contexts.

The example of the Tsembaga people in New Guinea may illustrate the influence of institutional knowledgeability. The Tsembaga regard pigs as wealth; wealth is good more so when tribal members have sufficient pigs to hold a year long ritual festival, a kaiko (Rappaport, 1968). This is followed by a tribal war with traditional enemies. The ritual according to the Tsembaga however, is about arranging one's relations with the spirits; it ensures that the 'life stuff' of men is preserved, the spirits of enemies thwarted and the continuation of membership in a territorial group guaranteed. At a level of understanding as guessing, an interpretation could be focussed on the idea of reinforcement of identity. But in the application of institutional knowledgeability, the better explanation might centre on the idea of contribution to material welfare through a spiritual ritual. The kaiko is a ritual means of disposing of a parasitic surplus of pigs; about the guaranteeing the ecology and food productivity of the environment. The Tsembaga do not learn this in any formal sense; it is institutionalised in their code of knowledge about themselves and their social historical organisation.

A second example might be found in certain classroom actions which may be interpreted in the light of application of knowledgeability in institutions. Pupils who line up in two rows of boys and girls respectively act, the meaning of which

could be understood as order and good teacher management: it could also be seen as the application of institutional knowledgeability - a residue of the previous history of primary schooling - that enters into the classroom. It may be interpreted at another 'deeper' level where pupil actions are socially structured before they enter the school. At another level, it may reflect the origins of order in the organisation of schooling and the emergence of the term 'class' as it applied to schools in the mid nineteenth century. At yet another level it may conceal the deeply embedded historical differences in gender arrangements in society. In the two latter levels, the best explanation may be said to lie in the knowledgeability that resides in and across institutions such as schools and education systems. This kind of "depth comprehension" is discussed in the next section.

The reconstruction of social structure

A reconstruction of knowledgeability in institutions may begin to provide an explanatory mediation for the depth interpretation of human action, but a greater comprehension may follow this explanation by reconstructing the structural elements or the pervasive stabilising character in classrooms and the societies in which they are located. This reconstruction is similar to Habermas's reconstruction of the stages of a developmental process and the history which facilitates this projection as a reconstruction (Thompson, 1981).

The reconstruction presupposes stages of development of the conditions which allow the researcher to explain institutions; and enables the researcher to grasp various aspects of institutions which would otherwise remain concealed. This includes the limits to the exercise of power and the efficacy of ideology as well as the dynamics of institutional persistence and collapse. The reconstruction searches for

social structuration across institutions.

The example of pupils lining up outside classrooms cited in the previous section may indicate the move to structural analysis. The 'gender' explanation can only be offered with inclusion of a consideration of the deeply 'rooted' hegemonic structures which emerged over a period of time and under different social and economic conditions and which are expressed as differences between the sexes.

Another example may be seen in Willis's study of working class culture. The author contends that it is necessary to remain at the level of the actors' discursive awareness of what they are doing, but the researcher must "plunge beneath the surface of ethnography in a more interpretive mode" (Willis, 1977:119). The 'lads' evasion of authority in the workplace may be interpreted as a 'cultural penetration' of the fact that labour-power is a variable source in a capitalist society.

The examples of pupils lining up (by gender) in orderly lines on the first day in a new school and Willis's 'lads' challenging the very fabric of economic and power structures indicate how it may be possible to 'see' across institutional effects and the inherent stabilising character of authority and gender structures in society itself.

The use of a form of structural analysis in the interpretive process should not be thought of as some kind of algebraic contortion. The structural analysis (which in effect begins with the reconstruction of institutional knowledgeability) proceeds from the 'surface' understanding of case records to their 'depth' explanation. The difference reflects the move from understanding to explanation, from self-reflection to critique, from naive awareness to critical interpretation. The analysis in the research is not a purely mechanistic fragmentation of case records through a form of

logical content analysis. Nor is the analysis ahistorical - the social contexts within a space-time framework are preserved in the analysis of text in the case records.

The methodology of interpretation includes representation of events and issues identified as being critical in giving meaning to the phenomenon in a research project. These are portrayed through the narrative case study reports (Bartlett, 1987) which are less a by-product of the above interpretive process and more the medium by which the researcher conveys a maximally good interpretation at the time the records are analysed.

The Scientific Nature of the Methodology

The schema outlined above should not be thought of as a straight forward application of a philosophical theory of interpretation to educational problems. Ricoeur's theory offers important insights and acts as a fund of useful resources (concepts, methods..) as do other theories from disciplines of knowledge but it is not the source of educational theory nor an interpretive theory that can be categorically described as educational. As Carr and Kemmis note (1986:124) :

the only source of educational theories and knowledge is the practical experiences out of which these problems are generated, and that the proper concern of educational research is with formulating theories that are grounded in the realities of educational practice.

The interpretive schema does make possible the analysis of educational phenomena and the educational practice in the text of the case records.

The schema is scientific in the sense that it allows the researcher to enquire into records of the practical experiences of practitioners. These experiences provide the subject-matter for educational enquiry and a testing ground on which results of theory can be based. The schema of interpretation only acquires scientific status when it suggests improved ways of

understanding of these experiences. It only acquires educational validity when procedures are tested and confirm the constructed educational theory.

Third, the schema is scientific to the extent that it offers a rigour and discipline, a cogent set of procedures and a concept of critical reflection in the interpretive act. It is 'practical' in the sense that it recognises the importance of social contexts in which educational practices are conducted, where problems emerge and where solutions may be tested.

Fourth, the schema is not a methodology that is governed by formal rules but one that caters for the dynamic relations between questions and methods. The schema acts as an interpretive device which may be used as a sense-making tool for analysing actions and events.

Fifth, the schema does not propose that the standards for assessing good judgements are universal or logical in any absolute sense. The schema acts as interpretive guidelines in which the standards are socially formed and in which will be reflected the social agendas of a particular historical period.

Sixth, the schema is based on a non-foundationalist view of educational research where there is no absolutely authoritative basis for the production of knowledge. But it recognises the need to avoid crass relativism in that it offers a clearly articulated process for making good educational judgements. The truth is not regarded as self-evident nor accepted in a critical and unreflective way but is unmasked through the elimination of the inadequacies of the values and beliefs implicit in educational practice recorded in the case records. Unreflective attitudes are replaced by critical scientific attitudes.

Finally, the schema does not seek to obscure or dichotomise the relationship between the explanation (the assumed province of the natural sciences) and understanding (the

assumed province of the human sciences); between the "objective" and the "subjective". Both are assumed to be moments on either end of a continuum. It is this movement from and to subjectivity and objectivity and from understanding as guessing to explanation and 'deeper' comprehension that enables the researcher to make good interpretive judgements in qualitative enquiry.

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